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SERMON

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PREACHED

AT ST. CHAD'S CHURCH,

IN

SHREWSBURY,

ON

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY XXX. 1793.

BY THOMAS STEDMAN. M. A. *K*

VICAR OF ST. CHAD'S.

FOR MY BRETHREN AND COMPANIONS SAKES, I WILL WISH
THEE PROSPERITY.—YEA, BECAUSE OF THE HOUSE OF
THE LORD OUR GOD, I WILL SEEK TO DO THEE GOOD,

Psalms cxvii. 8, 9.

SHREWSBURY:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. AND W. EDDOWES.

SOLD ALSO

BY T. N. LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1793.

[Price Sixpence.]

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PREACHED

AT ST. CHAD'S CHURCH,

IN

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY XXV. 1793.

BY THOMAS STEPMAN, M. A.

RECTOR OF ST. CHAD'S.

THE LORD OUR GOD, I WILL SEEK TO DO HIS DEED,
AND BE BLESSED AND COMFORTED, FOR HE WILL WITH
ME BE BLESSED AND COMFORTED, BECAUSE OF THE NAME OF
THE LORD OUR GOD, I WILL SEEK TO DO HIS DEED.

SHREWSBURY:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. AND W. TROWER.

SOLD ALSO

BY THE LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.

1793.

[Price Sixpence.]

TO

THE REVEREND

JOHN ROCKE, M.A.

MAYOR OF SHREWSBURY,

THE FOLLOWING

SERMON

IS INSCRIBED,

BY HIS HUMBLE SERVANT,

THOMAS STEDMAN.

ADVERTISEMENT.

HAVING been desired to print the following Discourse, which was written on a very short notice, and without any intention of publishing it, the Preacher has to apologize for whatever faults may be found in it, and for the free use he has made of the sentiments, and even the language of others. If it be serviceable to promote the cause of piety, loyalty, and charity, other consequences will but little affect him. *Vincit Amor Patriæ.*

A SERMON, &c.

EZRA vi. 10.

PRAY FOR THE LIFE OF THE KING.

I WILL not take up your time, by entering into the argument of those persons who look upon the observation of THIS DAY as a thing that is obsolete, and of no farther use, and that therefore the observance of it should be laid aside; but would only remark, That so long as the wisdom of our Governors shall think it proper to continue such a memorial of the past times, it becomes us to submit to their directions, and to consider, that these things happened to

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our Forefathers for enfamples ; and that they are written for our admonition, left we should offend as they had done.

That CHARLES THE FIRST had his faults, there can be no doubt : and that his Subjects had theirs, and much greater, there can be no doubt likewise. But whatever his faults might have been, they were not of that *nature* as to deserve the punishment that was inflicted on him. He should rather have been banished, or imprisoned *—but not murdered. “ Tell it not in *Gath* ! publish it not in the streets of *Askelon* ! ” It is a stain never to be wiped off ; a reproach that will be had in everlasting remembrance. — But though the deed was black and horrid ; it is some consolation to reflect, that it was the deed of comparatively *very few*. The great body of the nation protested warmly against it ; and it was left to the *Independents*, a class of men so called, who, setting all law, justice, and humanity at defiance, to do all the

* Though he deserved neither.

the mischief. Of this denomination was *Cromwell*, and most of his chiefs. A small party of desperate, hardened wretches did the business *then*, as such have *since* done it so recently in *France*.

— But we will drop this unpleasant subject, (though we must find ourselves much interested in it ; *Quis talia fando, temperet a lacrymis ?*) and go on to improve the present opportunity, in learning our duty as good christians and good citizens ; and expressing our loyalty to the best of Princes, by our most devout and affectionate prayers for him. *Pray for the Life of the King.*

Civil Government is so necessary to the welfare and happiness of mankind, that it would be impossible to subsist without it. *Live* perhaps we might do without it ; but then it would be a life of confusion and disorder, of jealousy and suspicion, of rapine and bloodshed. Good princes and magistrates are at once the ornament and the strength of a nation. Government is the

band of society which unites us together ; the safeguard of our peace ; the security of our persons and property. So that we are bound to thank God for those who are set in authority over us, and to pray for his favour and blessing upon them.

One important Advantage arising from Civil Government is, that by it we are secured in our Rights and Privileges--in the quiet and peaceable possession of those things which we call our own.

That we live — and that we live in any tolerable degree of comfort and self-enjoyment ; that we are not in a state of perpetual terror and apprehension ; and that we are free from the invasion of what we possess, either by the fraud or force of others, is entirely the effect of this great blessing. From *hence* it is, that every man may sit under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree, without having any to make him afraid.

Another

Another Benefit resulting from a good Government is, that we are protected by it in the free exercise and practice of Religion and Virtue.

For this reason, we should pray for Kings, and for all that are in authority, (as the Apostle exhorts) that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty * ; that is, in the practice of piety and devotion towards God ; of sobriety and temperance with respect to ourselves ; and of justice and charity towards all men.

It cannot be denied indeed, that good and virtuous men have sometimes been grievously persecuted by the Civil Authority, for the profession of religion ; as was the case of the apostles and primitive christians, and since them, of the noble army of martyrs, during the reign of Queen Mary. But, though the powers of the world have not at all times favoured christianity, and though authority has

* 1 Tim. ii. 2.

has been sometimes abused, still Government is necessary to the happiness of mankind. And even in a state of persecution, christians enjoyed many considerable benefits and advantages from Government, in protecting them from being perpetually exposed to popular rage and cruelty, and from the violence of wicked and unreasonable men. They had considerable intervals of peace and safety; and for the enjoyment afforded them by such intervals, they considered it their duty to be obedient to Government, and to offer up their prayers to God in behalf of it.

But the Government of this Nation (with very few exceptions) has always been friendly to the interests of religion and virtue. They have been taken under special notice and protection, and propagated with care, diligence, and zeal. So that our Kings have been nursing fathers, and our Queens nursing mothers *. The Throne of our present gracious Sovereign has been established

* Isaiah xlix. 23.

established in piety and virtue. His respect for the christian religion has been manifest to all men ; and the example he sets his subjects, discovers, that it has had its salutary effects upon him. He has laid no restraint upon men's consciences, (which ought always to be free) and allows them to worship the God of their fathers, according to the dictates and sentiments of their own minds.

Such are the benefits arising from Civil Government. — Permit me to point out to you the *obligation*, which the consideration of them lays upon us.

We are obliged to pray for our Governors, because we enjoy the benefit of their protection, and their endeavours for the public welfare. Under their shadow and benign influences we are safe. Our persons, properties, and liberties are protected by their power and laws. Therefore it is not only our duty, but justice and gratitude oblige us, to praise God for them, to give
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them our ardent good wishes, to speak of them with respect and reverence, to discountenance all seditious and disloyal practices, and to intercede with God for the continuance of their lives, and that they may be crowned with every blessing personal, public, and domestic. Our welfare is involved in theirs. Their prosperity extends itself to us. The streams are supplied from the fountain. The members are nourished from the head.

We are obliged likewise to pray for our Governors from motives of Charity and Compassion towards them; considering the burden they sustain; the dangers to which they are exposed; the cares, anxieties, and troubles, which necessarily devolve upon them; and the censures they undergo, either from weak, wicked, or ambitious men. To discharge properly all the parts of a good Governor, is a very difficult and troublesome province. *I pity Kings*, said a loyal Subject*, when he considered the hazard

* Mr. George Herbert.

hazard and difficulties to which they are constantly exposed. Persons in inferior stations, find solicitude and trouble enough to sustain their parts, and to act them properly. And if so, then certainly the care and business of the *whole*, must needs be a burden indeed ; and what abilities are sufficient for it — what strength and courage are equal to it ?

And as they need our prayers, for direction and assistance in their high and arduous office ; so likewise for God's powerful Grace to preserve them from those manifold temptations with which they are continually surrounded. As a *wise* man will not envy those who fill places of important trust and dignity ; so a *good* man will manifest a tender concern for them, amidst the dangers to which they are always liable, either from the height of their station — the extent of their power — from the abundance of those things, which minister to luxury and excess — from a crowd of flatterers, who sooth them in their faults, humour them in their

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passions,

passions, comply with their corrupt and vicious inclinations, and are always ready to execute their commands, and to serve them in their lusts and vices.

Having thus considered the Exhortation in the Text of *praying for the Life of the King*, and our duty in consequence of it; I shall employ the Second Part of my Discourse in applying it to the Occasion of This Day's Solemnity; and in proposing such advice as appears to me necessary for the present Times. — For I would preach to the *Times*, and consider the *Duties* of the *Times*.

It was a great misfortune, that in the beginning of the reign of our unhappy King, Charles the First, he should have been surrounded with ministers, who being averse to our constitution, as well as ignorant of it, were too solicitous to establish the authority of the Prince on the ruin of the liberties of the people. The violent and illegal manner with which this was done, made all, who had any concern for the welfare of
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their country, extremely apprehensive of the consequences of such bold attempts on the freedom of a brave people. — On the other hand, the jealousies conceived by the subject, were conducted without decency or temper; but by a concurrence of many fatal accidents, continued to increase, till the liberty of the people was laid as low as the prerogative of the prince.

Archbishop Laud, though a good man, was a great bigot. The Ecclesiastical Tribunal, which he had a principal hand in setting up, for examining the consciences of men, and introducing into the Church a discipline by no means suited to those times, was the occasion of particular discontent. So that (as one severely remarks) the fire was kindled at the altar; and the heavy judgments which followed, began at the House of God.

And though all the former grievances were offered to be redressed; and the royal concessions were so many, that more could

not with security be made by the King, or even received by the Subject, they all came too late ; for by this time the public commotions were too strong to be allayed. — In short, the recollection of unwarrantable acts of power ; the oppressions of some men high in office ; and the influence of a popish Queen ; — these and other similar circumstances contributed to create unconquerable fears in Many, and to give life to the wicked and ambitious hopes of a Few, whereby the public ruin was at length too effectually completed.

In this situation of affairs, Providence seeing us ripe for destruction, and justly deserving it, gave us up into the hands of a lawless power. For not so much as the very footsteps of the antient Government were now to be traced out. And though a Reform of that part of the Constitution, which had been greatly abused, was for a time, the only thing they had in view ; still nothing would satisfy them but the ruin of the whole ; which a few armed miscreants
were

were wicked enough to effect, after having brought their Sovereign (in open defiance of all law) first to the bar of his subjects, then to the block, and in a bold and outrageous manner, to a public death.

As to the Character of this unfortunate Prince, we may say, that many princes have equalled him in his mistakes, and the abuse of his power ; few have equalled him in his sufferings, or in his behaviour under them, — from the beginning of his imprisonment, to the last moments of his life.

The Fountain of power was no sooner dried up by the Death of the King, but a state of nature began to take place. All was disorder and confusion. In civil matters, all was tumult — in Ecclesiastical, all was novelty, mingled with the wildest enthusiasm. No change was made, but from one scheme of confusion to another. Whilst prudent and moderate men, of every party, bewailed the misery of their Country, when it was too late to find out a remedy. —

Such

Such was the deplorable state of those disastrous Times, that an Historian reckons up many different shapes of power from the day on which the King was murdered, to the time when God was pleased to restore to us our just and legal rights.

These were the Circumstances of Those Days.

And I would observe from what has been said — That National Breaches once made are not only difficult to be healed, but that even the desired End proposed by them, is seldom or never attained.

There cannot be a more striking instance of this, than in the case before us; unless indeed we parallel with it the horrid transactions of *France*. It is generally agreed, that at first a War in this Country was not thought of by any party; but was afterwards insensibly brought on by a series of strange and unforeseen accidents. So true is the observation of *Solomon*, that “the beginning

ginning of strife is as when one letteth out water *," one knows not where it will stop, or how wide a breach may be made by it. Let us then "leave off contention before it be meddled with;" and instead of giving mutual provocations, either by unseemly language, ill-natured invective, or party zeal, let us endeavour after all the healing methods of mutual forbearance.

The Governors of this World have (in the example of this unfortunate King) a lively and affecting instance of the danger of every experiment that may be made at the expense of the rights of their subjects; and are taught by it, that even the just power they are possessed of, can only be exercised with honour and safety to themselves, in hearing the complaints, consulting the interests, and promoting the ease and prosperity of their people.

On the other hand — it is the evident duty of Subjects, to avoid the beginning of
 strife;

* Prov. xvii. 14.

strife ; because they may be otherwise insensibly led on from one step to another, till they have defeated their own purposes, by engaging in disputes most dangerous to themselves, as well as most destructive to the peace and happiness of their Country. Nothing has proved so fatal to a free people, as a wanton abuse of the blessings of Liberty. For while the governing part of a kingdom is greatly oppressed with the weight of faction, it may be induced to try every method of supporting by violence that authority, which might otherwise be destroyed by the secret arts of restless and ambitious men.

So cautious ought men to be of opening such unnecessary Breaches in a Government, as may endanger that Liberty, which alone gives a relish to every other enjoyment. — Our duty is to pay a uniform and conscientious regard to the laws of the land ; to be content with our stations ; not to meddle with things that are too high for us ; to fear God, and to honour the King ; to
render

render to all their dues ; tribute, to whom tribute is due ; custom, to whom custom ; fear, to whom fear ; honour, to whom honour.

Finally. The design of what has been said is to shew, that the whole of our Duty on *This Occasion*, is to beg of God to keep far from us the evils of the days that are past ; that we may not be infected by the wicked example of another nation ; to pray for the continuance and improvement of the blessings we enjoy ; and to arm ourselves with zeal and resolution, to convey down our civil and religious rights (those inestimable blessings of our Country) at least as pure as we received them, to the generations which are yet to come.

I shall conclude my Discourse with an Anecdote from our English History ; which has long affected my mind, and which I hope you will treasure up in yours.

Sir Thomas Wyndham, who was a zealous royalist in the reign of King Charles

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the First, a few days before his death, called to him his five sons. “ My children, said he, we have hitherto seen serene and quiet times under our three last Sovereigns ; but I now warn you to prepare for clouds and storms. Factions arise on every side to threaten the tranquillity of your native Country. But whatever happens, faithfully honour and obey your Prince, and adhere to the Crown. I charge you never to forsake the Crown, though it should hang upon a bush *.

The advice had its effect. His sons proved loyal and honest Men.

The Moral of which is, — My son, fear thou the Lord and the King ; and meddle not with them that are given to change †.

* Alluding, I suppose, to the Crown of Richard the Third, which was found in an Hawthorn-Bush, in Bosworth Field.

† Prov. xxiv. 21.

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... to a Young Lieutenant, from the Rev. Mr.

NOTES

of Father and Son; the Life of Charles.

and another to "get no more" draw on bank of bank.

